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ABSTRACT

Spranger's typology of six mental types of personality was used to study students who had dropped out of college but were eligible to attend. The objective was to determine if a set of written prompts, based on appeals to specific norms, could be instrumental in attracting students to (or back to) college. The usefulness of Spranger's typology as a model for generating appeals to a diverse population of students was also addressed. The experimental population was divided into eight groups. Six groups received a treatment letter that was based on Spranger's six types (economic, cognitive, aesthetic, social, political, and religious). A seventh group received a neutral letter, and the control group received no letter. Each treatment group had 500 students, and the control group had over 1,000 students. A reentry form was sent with each letter. Spranger's theory of types did not provide a simple cure to the problem of standardization and diversity in the modern university--the "multiversity." However, the research indicated that different types of prompts, based on appeals to different values, will generate different rates of response. (SW)

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Spranger's Typology and Student Norms in Higher Education: An Experimental Model

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Spranger's Typology and Student Norms
in Higher Education: An Experimental Model

The educational concept of the "multiversity" has been around for a long time. Many colleges and universities offer a broad array of academic programs that presumably appeal to diverse types of students--literary types, business types, science types, etc. But the multiversity, perhaps because it arose on a wave of educational democratization and needed to accomodate masses of students, also gave rise to the concept of a universal student, one that can be processed in a standardized way using the methods of rational bureaucracy. The multiversity thus finds itself pulled in two directions: one towards a unity no longer fixed on the universal qualities of a liberal education but on the need to function as an efficient, integrated organization; the other, towards multiplicity, specialization and a more diverse population of students.

This dilemma poses no particular problem for the continuity of a student's education as long as students being processed by the educational bureaucracy gain support for their value orientations from their teachers, academic departments and fellow students. But when a student drops out of school, these contacts are lost. Moreover, students who have never attended a university have never had such contacts. Thus the problem for the multiversity is how to entice old students back to the academic environment and how to appeal to new students who as yet have no particular intellectual alliance. Under these circumstances the image of a universal student stamped out by the university bureaucracy becomes a hopelessly inadequate banality. Students, like most humans, want others to address what they consider important and personal in their individual

existence. But for prospective students, this appeal to the individual must go beyond the ridiculous campaigns of the direct mail marketeers, who insert a personal name--often misspelled--into the text of a computer generated letter. What is needed is some way to appeal to the authentic values of prospective students without sacrificing the need of the modern institution for efficient management. This problem is perhaps more acute as institutions face periods of declining enrollments and must be more active in reaching out to new students while keeping old students on board.

A possible solution to this problem may be to develop psychological typologies that are relevant to higher education. Such typologies, like taxonomies in general, would represent a middle range conceptual model that recognizes the complexity of the variables conditioning human behavior without conceding the concept of a unifying principle. The basic premise of a psychological typology is that there are certain higher orders and unifying principles that tend to organize and determine lower order behavioral phenomena, and that there are several of these unifying principles, hence, there are different personalities.

Personality is a favorite topic of the human drama. A history of psychological typologies would start before Plato's list of artisan, soldier, philosopher king, and end after Freud's list of oral, anal and phallic. These typologies have been enormously helpful in theoretical formulations, but difficulty to handle operationally. There are typologies based on normative systems that should be easier to test experimentally. This is because a normative system is essentially a mental or rational system and thus uses the mental operations of judgement and evaluation which often result in practical action. A typology based on mental values also seems more appropriate to those who seek to grow mentally in an

educational environment. One such typology was developed by Eduard Spranger (1928), who defined six basic mental types of personality.

Spranger's six types are the: 1) economic, 2) cognitive 3) aesthetic, 4) social, 5) political, and 6) religious. For purposes of theorizing, these types are conceived as "ideal" following Max Weber, but as Spranger points out, empirically there are many mixtures or different proportions. Nevertheless, Spranger's theory holds that in most personalities, there is one dominant orientation to which the other mental orientations are subservient. For example, an economic type would love aesthetic balance and form mostly in a useful object.

For each mental type there are principles of evaluations or judgement. In the economic type the principle of self-preservation (conceived in the broad sense of relative welfare) and the principle of utility (using the least means to accomplish the greatest good) are the guiding norms. The cognitive or theoretical type values what is universally consistent and valid, what explains as an externality and what is not eccentric and ideosyncratic. The aesthetic type is oriented by what can be expressed through the particular, what expresses internalities, and what expresses grace, form and balance. For the social type the evaluative principle is what will allow one to surrender to the values of another person, what promotes love and community. The political type is the reciprocal of the social type. The political norms center around what will allow one to surpass others, what will allow one to be recognized and known and what are the sources of power and leverage over others. The religious type embodies the principle of unanimity and makes judgements based on what will put one's life in harmony and is consistent with one's meaning and purpose. The

religious principle is central to the formulation of any type, in that it is the tendency toward unity itself.

Based on Spranger's typology, the objectives of the current research are to:

1. Determine if a set of written prompts, based on appeals to specific norms, can be instrumental in attracting students to (or back to) an institution of higher learning.

2. Determine the usefulness of Spranger's typology as a model for generating appeals to a diverse population of students.

Most studies of enrollment and persistence in higher education rely on statistical models such as multiple regression and discriminant analysis (Simpson, Baker and Mellinger, 1980). There have been some studies in which naturally occuring groups have been treated from a quasi-experimental design approach (Anderson, 1981; Newlon and Gaither, 1980). The studies using conventional experimental designs have tended to fit in a microlevel-macrolevel dichotomy that almost surely grows out of the organization of colleges and universities. Focusing on class, course, and department levels, there is an abundance of microlevel experiments (Bochniarz, 1978; Rouche and Mink, 1975). Institution-wide, macrolevel experiments are less frequently reported, although there are notable examples of such experiments (Lenning, Sauer, and Beal, 1980). A recent large scale empirical study by Boshier and Collins (1983) has demonstrated the validity of the typological model of adult learning motivation. This model was developed by Houle (1961), who suggested three basic types of motivation: goal-oriented, activity oriented, and learning oriented.

Previous research by the present authors (Prather, Sturgeon, and Greene, 1983) explored the differentiation of two types, intellectual and

economic. Letters containing appeals to the normative values of these two types were mailed to a population of students who were eligible to return to school but had not. These appeals to normative values were shown to have significantly different impacts when compared to each other and the control group. The success of this experiment led to a desire to refine the typology with the hopes of being better able to appeal to prospective students and understanding more clearly what types constitute the general student body.

Method

Like the previous experiment, the current research has as its target a group of students who had dropped out of the university but were eligible to attend. Specifically, those students who had not attended in the four quarters prior to Winter 1984, but who had attended sometime during the year before they dropped-out were selected as the experimental population. The experiment was thus geared toward the reentry of students for Winter quarter 1984.

The experimental population was divided into eight groups. Six groups received a treatment letter that was based on Spranger's model of types (see Appendix). A seventh group received a placebo treatment--a neutral letter. The control group received no letter. Each of the treatment groups had about 500 subjects; the control group had over 1000 subjects. The subjects were randomly assigned to the particular groups. A reentry form was sent with each letter. No return envelope was included.

Results

Table 1 shows the outcome of the appeal to apply for reentry. Those subjects receiving the treatment letter and reentry form were much more

likely to apply for reentry than those in the control group. The Chi Square was statistically significant. Only 2.2% of the control group applied, while the treatment groups response ranged from a low of 4.2% for the appeal to social values to a high of 5.9% for the appeal to religious values. The placebo group also received a high response; at 5.3% it was third in the rate of response.

The outcome of the experiment in terms of actually registering for course work as opposed to merely applying for reentry is found in Table 2. The Chi Square is not significant. The lowest response rate in this table is for the economic type appeal; it is eight-tenths of a point lower than the control group. The response of those student who received the social type appeal appears relatively high at 2.7%.

To determine whether the treatment had an effect on the amount of credit hours taken by those who registered, an analysis of variance was performed. The results are contained in Table 3. The over-all F-ratio was less than 1 and thus was not significant. While those receiving the social and religious appeal registered for slightly more hours, those receiving the economic and placebo treatment registered for less hours than the control group.

Summary and Discussion

The discrepency in results between those students in the experimental population who merely applied for reentry and those students who actually enrolled raises several questions. Why would students who took the time to complete a reetnry form and mail it to the university fail to follow-up and register for courses? There is of course a difference in cost. The cost to the student in time for filling-out a form and in money for buying a

stamp is a lot less than the cost in time and money of attending classes. The difference in results may thus represent the difference between intention and execution. It is also possible that some of the students who applied for reentry do not plan to actually attend until later in the academic year. If this is the case, more significant result for actual enrollment may be obtained when additional information for later quarters becomes available.

In the previous experiment where only two psychological types were considered, the registration data became significant only after two quarters. It was thought that one quarter would be enough for this experiment because of its larger number of cases. Another factor that could be working in the difference between applying and registering may be called the Fall quarter nostalgia effect. This effect would hold that students are more likely to come back to school during the Fall than any other quarter because 1) Fall is the traditional time of return to school and 2) Fall is a time of remembering the past (harvesting the product of the year and taking into account ones's accomplishments). Thus, having received treatment letters during the Fall may have been conducive to a good response and the necessity of registering during the Winter may have merely lost the Fall quarter nostalgia effect or have had a negative effect of its own. This seasonal phenomena raises the question of the interaction between personality types and the seasons of the year. Perhaps there is a sanguine Spring, coleric Summer, a melancholy Fall and a plegmatic Winter. This is not an entirely facecious suggestion. One does feel expectations rise during the Spring and sink in depression just before Winter. An appeal to students should perhaps consider these seasonal effects on personality.

The primary interest of this study is the effect of the appeals to different personality types. The question then arises as to why the placebo group had a response rate that was better than four of the psychological treatment types in the measurement of reentry-applications?[1] Perhaps part of the answer comes in considering the placebo as a neutral or zero measure. Those responses that are better than zero are positive, those that are less, negative. Looking at Table 1 this way, the religious and aesthetic appeal have relatively positive effect while the economic, cognitive and politicals are grouped closely together in their relatively negative effect. The social appeal is in a negative class of its own and is separated from the highly positive religious appeal by over one and a half percentage points.

A number of suggestions can be put forward to interpret this phenomena. Let us also suppose, following Spranger, that some types of personalities are antagonistic. Thus the aesthetic type opposes the cognitive type, the religious type opposes the economic type, and the political type opposes the social type. An economic appeal to a religious type, therefore, may tend to turn that person off--more so than a neutral appeal, and if there are more religious types than economic types in the student population, this would account for the relatively negative effect of the economic appeal. A similar argument can be advanced for the aesthetic versus cognitive appeal. Many people, however, may intuitively doubt that among former college students there are more religious and aesthetic types than there are economic and cognitive types. However, if one considers that

[1]All treatment groups, including the placebo, had a much higher rate of response than the control in this measurement.

there is a basic conflict between what a society values and what an individual values, this may account for unexpected results. Our modern society values brains and money, the modern individual may resist this imposition and value meaning and beauty, even as the individual is forced to get an education in order to get a job. Of course, all values come from social experience, they do not spring out of the head of individuals. This does not obviate the possibility that individuals may adopt values that countervail what is perceived to be the dominant values in a society.

The result that some appeals to personality type do better than the neutral placebo and some do not could possibly suggest that the student population can indeed be divided into types. What remains obscure, however, is the interaction effect between the unknown number of the different types in the test population and the ability of a prompt to generate negative as well as positive effects. The relatively low, negative (as compared to the placebo), effect for the economic prompt may be attributed to several causes, among which are the possibility of a lower number of economic types in the test population and the negative impact of an economic prompt on the other (perhaps larger in population) types.

There may also be two other structural factors at work in Spranger's typology. First there is the ranking of types which runs from the low, least inclusive category of the economic personality to the high, most inclusive category of the religious personality. The idea here is that economic self-preservation is the lowest common denominator of mental existence. Thus an economic value orientation is the lowest value orientation but also the one on which the other orientations rest. Under extreme pressure human values will tend to retreat to economic norms, but

economic norms are also that which everyone seeks to transcend. A particular personality type exists in a pressure zone between that which it hopes to achieve and that which it feels it has transcended. The types of personality, or levels of transcendance, culminate in the religious type,[2] which does not exclude any phenomena, good or bad, from possible meaning. The religious appeal may have generated the best response because students were responding to their aspirations rather than their reality[3]--(if these can be in fact separated). Any type of personality could consider itself to be the one and only type of personality and hence all inclusive; that is, any type could conceive of itself as the religious type. As Spranger pointed out, the very existence of a personality is dependent upon the integrating effect of religious aspirations. Thus the religious appeal to personality may be greater because every personality is in part religious.

The other possible structural factor at work is the division between what may be considered warm, communal values and cool, individual values. This division breaks down the types into the cool-economic, cognitive, political--and the warm--religious, aesthetic, social. It can be noted on Table 1 that the cool types are separated by only .1% in their rate of response and all the "cool" types have a negative influence compared to the placebo. In general the cool types may be considered indifferent to the concrete existence--the sense--of other people. Thus the economic type is concerned with his own well being, the cognitive type with abstract universal values, and the political type with using people as objects for success. On the other hand, the warm types desire the love and appreciation

[2]One must remember that religious in Spranger's sense is not the same as recognizing the authority of a transcendent being, but is the drive toward totalizing what one's life is to mean.

[3]This would explain why many who applied for reentry did not register.

of others. The aesthetic type needs his individualistic expression confirmed by other particular expressions, the religious type needs to integrate the experience of others into his meanings and the social type is explicitly concerned with sacrifice to others. The difference in response noted in Table 1 between the religious-aesthetic high response grouping and the economic-cognitive-political low response grouping, may be attributed to this structural division. College is fundamentally considered to be a communal experience, and prompts that appeal to other than communal values do relatively poor.

This would perhaps be a good theory except for the very low response elicited by the appeal to the social type. At 4.2% it was in a group of its own, separated from the lowest of the other so called "warm" types by 1.5 percentage points. On top of this, in Table 2 (Chi Square not significant), the social value response at 2.7% comes out on the very top of the heap, followed by the other "warm" values--religious and aesthetic--with identical 2.2% rates of response. This fact labels the social appeal as some sort of anomality. It would fit in better with the theoretical model if it elicited a rate of response that was similar to the other warm values--religious and aesthetic. It would be more harmful to the model if it were not separated from the "cool" responses of the economic-political-cognitive appeals. One possible explanation for the anomality of the social response may be found in the nature of a university that is both a multiversity and a non-traditional, non-residential, urban university that receives the majority of its students as transfers from other institutions. Thus students who transferred from more traditional institutions and who were fundamentally social types could be turned off by the lack of

community found in large urban universities. Such students if they dropped out may respond negatively to what could be construed as a hypocritical appeal to social values from an urban institution they know to be the antithesis of "social". The appeal to social values may not work because it is so blatantly untrue in large, urban universities where many students work, are married, and in general are more concerned with their private lives than with the collegiate experience. The urban university would probably attract less social types to begin with and thus would have less of these types in its dropout population to attract back with appeals to social values. Thus a combination of turning off those social types who did attend the urban multiversity and having fewer social types in general may account for the poor response to the social type appeal.

Not all social types that attend the urban university, however, have negative feelings about it. Some do participate in on-campus social organizations, sports, politics, etc. Even though such students may have a low representation in the former student population pool, they may respond more positively to a prompt from the institutions. This may explain why the social prompt elicited a poor response in the appeal to apply (it was nevertheless, twice the response of the control group) and elicited a relatively strong showing in the actual registrations. Hence, those students who had good social experiences at the multiversity, even though few in number may be more easily coaxed back to the institution.

A few words should be said about the relatively poor response to the economic prompt both on the appeal to apply and the actual registrations. Economic types may be under-represented in the former student population simply because being more concerned for their own well being, they survive

the pitfalls of college life and have less tendency to dropout. In addition, economic appeals may appear crass and mean and as such countervail the ideal of the university as 1) a communal experience or 2) a place of mind and idea. It appears that appeals to economic values are not as productive for the university as appealing to other types of values.

This study has raised many more questions than it has answered. In some respects the experiment would have been more satisfying if the psychological types had been delineated from each other in an unambigous way. The study tests the power of interpretation in terms of the usefulness of a theory of psycholgical types for education. Further research must proceed in two directions. First, a way to categorize the experimental population is needed. This will alleviate the problem of not knowing whether the stimulus or the size of the sensitive sub-population is the major factor in the rate of response to a prompt. Second, it appears that longer time horizons may be needed to find the long term effect of prompting. Specifically, will students who receive a prompt tend to return to the university more often than students who do not when observations are made over longer periods of time? Also how long do the students receiving prompts and returning to the university tend to stay compared to other students?

Spranger's theory of types does not provide a simple cure to the problem of standardization and diversity in the modern university--multiversity. However, the present research shows that different types of prompts, based on appeals to different values, will generate different rates of response. Some tentative explanations for these results have been suggested.

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Appendix

Letters by Spranger Types

Economic:

The challenge of the real world demands skill and knowledge. University offers you an opportunity to develop the talents and obtain the credentials you will need to succeed.

Cognitive:

The desire to think and the ability to understand are important qualities in a puzzling world. University offers you the opportunity to derive ideas and find real solutions.

Aesthetic:

The balance and harmony of a well designed education are of personal importance. University offers you the opportunity to experience the pleasure of education.

Social:

A university is a world of interesting people. University offers you the opportunity to exchange friendship and help build a community of learning.

Political:

Knowledge is the key to leadership and success. University offers you the opportunity to find personal achievement and meet skillful people.

Religious:

The quest for meaning is the foundation of a University. University offers you the opportunity to seek knowledge and discover what you are.

Placebo:

The winter quarter session will begin soon and applications for re-admission are being reviewed now. If you would like to come back to University, complete the enclosed form and return it to the Office of the Registrar. If you have already re-applied, please disregard this letter.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance of Treatment and Control Groups on Hours Registered For

Treatment Groups	Hours	N
Social	.17	527
Religious	.16	511
Cognitive	.14	523
Aesthetic	.13	510
Political	.12	515
Control	.11	1241
Economic	.09	528
Placebo	.09	530
Total	.12	4884

Analysis of Variable

Source of Variation	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Treatment	3.271	7	.467	.504	.83
Residual	4518.090	4876	.927		
Total	4521.363	4833			

Table 1

Distribution of Responses of Treatment and Control Groups for Application for Re-entry

Treatment	Applied Re-entry %	Did Not Apply Re-entry %	Total N
Religious	5.9	94.1	511
Aesthetic	5.7	94.3	510
Placebo	5.3	94.7	530
Economic	4.9	95.1	528
Cognitive	4.8	95.2	522
Political	4.7	95.3	515
Social	4.2	95.8	527
Control	2.2	97.8	1241
Total	4.3	95.7	4884

$\chi^2 = 21, 2 \quad df = 7 \quad p = .004$

Table 2

Distribution of Responses of Treatment and Control Groups for Registering for Course Work

Treatment	Registered %	Did Not Register %	Total N
Social	2.7	97.3	527
Aesthetic	2.2	97.8	510
Religious	2.2	97.8	511
Political	2.1	97.9	515
Cognitive	2.1	97.9	522
Control	1.9	98.1	1241
Placebo	1.7	98.3	530
Economic	1.1	98.9	528
Total	2.0	98.0	4887

$X^2 = 3.8$ df = 7 p = .80